# IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

SHIRLEY MORRISON

6422 Argyle Street

CIVIL ACTION

Philadelphia, PA 19111

NO.

Plaintiff,

٧.

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

PHILADELPHIA GAS WORKS 800 W. Montgomery Avenue Philadelphia, PA 19122

Defendant.

erendant.

# **CIVIL ACTION COMPLAINT**

Plaintiff, Shirley Paige (hereinafter referred to as "Plaintiff" unless otherwise indicated), by and through her undersigned counsel, hereby avers as follows:

### I. Introduction

1. Plaintiff has initiated this action to redress violations by Defendant of the Family and Medical Leave Act ("FMLA" - 29 U.S.C. §§ 2601 et. seq.). Plaintiff was unlawfully denied multiple promotions, and she suffered damages more fully described/sought herein.

#### II. Jurisdiction and Venue

2. This Court may properly maintain jurisdiction over Defendant because Defendant's contacts with this state and this judicial district are sufficient for the exercise of jurisdiction over Defendant to comply with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice, satisfying the standard set forth by the United States Supreme Court in <u>International Shoe Co v. State of Washington</u>, 326 U.S. 310 (1945) and its progeny.

- 3. This action is initiated pursuant to a federal law. The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania has original subject matter jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 because the claims arise under the laws of the United States.
- 4. Venue is properly laid in this District pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1391(b)(1) and (b)(2), because Defendant resides in and/or conduct business in this judicial district and because a substantial part of the acts and/or omissions giving rise to the claims set forth herein occurred in this judicial district.

#### III. Parties

- 5. The averment of the foregoing paragraph is hereby incorporated by reference as if set forth fully herein.
  - 6. Plaintiff is an adult individual residing at the above-captioned address.
- 7. Philadelphia Gas Works ("PGW" or "Defendant"), is a municipally owned gas company operating in Pennsylvania with a principal place of business at the above-captioned address.
- 8. At all times relevant herein, Defendant acted by and through its agents, servants, and employees, each of whom acted at all times relevant herein in the course and scope of their employment with and for Defendant.

## IV. Factual Background

- 9. The averments of the foregoing paragraphs are hereby incorporated by reference as if set forth fully herein.
- 10. Plaintiff was hired by Defendant originally in or about December of 2008 as a customer service representative.

- 11. Plaintiff performed her job well; and as a result, she was promoted to a quality Sr. Quality Assurance, CSD in or about June of 2011.
- 12. Plaintiff was at all times relevant during her period of employment a full-time employee.
- 13. During at least the last 5 years of Plaintiff's employment, Plaintiff continually utilized leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act ("FMLA") on an intermittent basis for reasons including but not limited to:
  - a) Plaintiff suffered from adenomyosis (as serious health condition);
  - b) Plaintiff suffered from Carpel Tunnel Syndrome (a serious health condition);
  - c) Plaintiff suffered from Fiber Myalgia (a serious health condition);
  - d) Plaintiff suffered from depression (a serious health condition); and
  - e) Plaintiff's daughter had serious health conditions (Epilepsy) requiring intermittent time off for episodes and medical treatment.<sup>1</sup>
- 14. Defendant pervasively commits FMLA errors and violations, and in turns violates employees' rights, such as Plaintiff. Specifically, Defendant: (a) has often failed to designate certain partial or whole days as FMLA when taken for FMLA-qualifying reasons; (b) failed to input FMLA information into its computer system; (c) misplaced documentation or information about and concerning FMLA; and (d) overall has historically very poorly administered FMLA of employees.

3

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> There are a number of medical complications not specified fully in subparts (a) – (e) that also necessitated the aforesaid intermittent medical leave, but these examples were the primary categories of serious health conditions of Plaintiff and her child that in fact required long-term intermittent medical leave through her later years of employment with Defendant.

- 15. Plaintiff was in fact directly denied multiple promotions because of Defendants' consideration of her FMLA absences and poor administration of FMLA within its business.
- 16. Plaintiff applied for multiple job positions / promotions between August of 2015 and August of 2017.
- 17. The types of positions Plaintiff applied for included but were not limited to advanced or supervisory positions such as "DRU Field Representative (carrying with them increased compensation, benefits and responsibilities).
- 18. Plaintiff was expressly denied said positions including her most recent early 2017 application (a denial that occurred in April of 2017) due to Defendant's consideration of her absences (which Defendant references as "occurrences"). Defendant's rationale for denying Plaintiff multiple positions including through early 2017, was memorialized verbatim as follows:

Thank you for your interest in the above position with DRU.

Unfortunately, you will not be considered for this position at this time. This decision is based on occurrence standards for permanent transfers and promotions as set by the Collective Bargaining Agreement. The current absence standard is 6 occurrences for 26 days (6/26) over a two (2) year period. You have nine (9) occurrences for eight (8) days of non-FMLA absences over two years.

#### The occurrences include:

3/26/2015 Absence – Sick 3/27/2015 Absence – Sick 6/5/2015 Absence – Sick 6/6/2015 Absence – Sick 7/16/2015 Absence – Sick 7/17/2015 Absence – Sick 7/31/15 Absence – Sick 8/17/2015 Absence – Sick 9/30/2015 Late 3/8/2016 Late 8/17/2016 Late See 4/5/17 e-mail Promotion Denial Letter, attached hereto as "Exhibit A."

- 19. The bulk of Plaintiff's (partial or full) absences that Defendant *directly considered* in not promoting Plaintiff on multiple occasions *included FMLA-qualifying absences* between June of 2015 through August of 2015. Defendant's non-promotion of Plaintiff on each occasion is therefore *per se* unlawful.
- 20. Plaintiff directly communicated to her management and/or appropriate persons each time she needed to miss time for an FMLA-qualifying reason. By way of example, on July 31, 2015, Plaintiff sent an e-mail to Defendant's management stating: "I am leaving today 7/31/2015 FMLA for myself and am going straight to the hospital." See 7/31/15 e-mail from Plaintiff to Defendant's Management, attached hereto as "Exhibit B." As can be seen supra, Defendant still counted such time against Plaintiff in denying her promotions.
- 21. Plaintiff adamantly contested Defendant's inclusion of dates it counted against her that were <u>both</u> a medical accommodation (under anti-discrimination laws) and FMLA-qualifying.
- 22. After Plaintiff had made multiple complaints about Defendant's poor handling and administration of FMLA designations, Defendant claimed Plaintiff did not have an updated FMLA certification on file from between June and August of 2015. Defendant's attempt to manufacture a defense to Plaintiff's unlawful non-promotions fails for multiple reasons:
  - (1) Plaintiff provided Defendant with *annual* certifications in June and September of 2014 to cover her for the entire upcoming year (through September of 2014);
  - (2) Plaintiff continually utilized FMLA between June and August of 2015 each time notifying her management *without* any supervisor, human resources

- personnel or any other administrative or management personnel telling Plaintiff she was not FMLA eligible; and
- (3) Defendant did not contact Plaintiff for an FMLA recertification until September of 2015. It is not an employee's responsibility to provide FMLA certifications because he or she thinks an employer might want one on file because such certifications are not required under the FMLA for the exercise of FMLA rights. If an employer desires a "subsequent" certification, it "may" require the employee to obtain one and must direct he or she do so. 29 U.S.C. § 2613(e).<sup>2</sup> Indeed, employers often allow employees to regularly use FMLA all over the United States without an active FMLA certification on file (because certifications are not necessarily a prerequisite to taking FMLA, but rather, an employer's option to verify the legitimacy of the FMLA need if desired).

# Count I <u>Violations of the Family and Medical Leave Act ("FMLA")</u> (Interference & Retaliation) - Against All Defendants -

23. The foregoing paragraphs are incorporated herein in their entirety as if set forth in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> "The responsibility to request FMLA certification is the employer's." Thorson v. Gemini, Inc., 205 F.3d 370, 381–82 (8th Cir. 2000). In Thorson, the Court affirmed the grant of summary judgment to the plaintiff where the plaintiff was advising of FMLA conditions via notes for days off but the employer failed to request an FMLA certification for such absences and counted such absences against the plaintiff for purposes of termination. Id. In fact, when an employer becomes aware of an employee seeking FMLA qualifying absenteeism, it only has "five business days" to present the employee with an FMLA certification if it desires medical support for the FMLA absences with written notices identifying timelines to have the certification executed. See 29 CFR 825.300. An employer cannot lay idly by and claim since an employee failed to affirmatively provide an FMLA certification (that is not even required and is entirely in the discretion of an employer) only to later claim that such absences were not protected under the FMLA. See Wilson v. Lemington Home for the Aged, 159 F. Supp. 2d 186, 193 (W.D. Pa. 2001)(granting summary judgment to the plaintiff-employee because employer failed to provide a written notice with a request for a certification to an employee but took an adverse action against him for allegedly not providing such a certification, as the FMLA regulations are eminently clear that an employer must present an employee with written expectations and a certification immediately upon notice of FMLA-qualifying absenteeism . . . further clarifying employers cannot rely on blanket employment policies or handbooks in lieu of individualized written notices).

full.

- 24. Plaintiff was an eligible employee under the definitional terms of the FMLA, 29 U.S.C. § 2611(a)(i)(ii).
- 25. Plaintiff met all FMLA eligibility requirements from 2013 through 2017, and Plaintiff exercised her rights to use intermittent FMLA leave for herself and her child during this timeframe.
- 26. Defendant interfered with, restrained, and denied Plaintiff multiple promotions and/or better positions within Defendant from 2015 through 2017 specifically because of Plaintiff's FMLA usage.
- 27. Defendant: (a) failed to properly designate medical leave; (b) failed to properly give written individualized notifications to Plaintiff and other employees; (c) systematically poorly administers FMLA; and (d) denied Plaintiff job positions as aforesaid in retaliation for her exercise of FMLA rights and separately interfered with Plaintiff's rights under the FMLA by counting FMLA absenteeism while prejudicing Plaintiff by failing to fulfill its own notice obligations.
- 28. These actions as stated herein constitute both interference and retaliation violation of the FMLA.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays that this Court enter an Order providing that:

B. Defendant is to compensate Plaintiff, reimburse Plaintiff and make Plaintiff whole for any and all pay and benefits Plaintiff would have received had it not been for Defendant's illegal actions, including but not limited to past lost earnings, future lost earnings, salary, pay increases, bonuses, medical and other benefits, training, promotions, pension, and seniority. Plaintiff should be accorded those benefits illegally withheld from the date she first suffered

retaliation/interference at the hands of Defendant until the date of verdict;

C. Plaintiff is to be awarded liquidated damages, as permitted by applicable law, in an

amount determined by the Court or trier of fact to be appropriate to punish Defendant for its willful,

deliberate, malicious and outrageous conduct and to deter Defendant or other employers from

engaging in such misconduct in the future;

D. Plaintiff is to be awarded the costs and expenses of this action and reasonable legal

fees as provided by applicable federal and state law;

E. Any verdict in favor of Plaintiff is to be molded by the Court to maximize the

financial recovery available to the Plaintiff in light of the caps on certain damages set forth in

applicable federal law; and

F. Plaintiff's claims are to receive trial by jury to the extent allowed by applicable law.

Plaintiff has also endorsed this demand on the caption of this Complaint in accordance with Federal

Rule of Civil Procedure 38(b).

Respectfully submitted,

KARPF, KARPF, & CERUTTI, P.C.

By:

Ari R. Karpf

3331 Street Road

Two Greenwood Square

Suite 128

Bensalem, PA 19020

(215) 639-0801

Date: June 23, 2017

# Exhibit A

### Morrison, Shirley M

From:

Morrison, Shirley M

Sent:

Friday, April 07, 2017 10:44 AM

To:

'spaige524@gmail.com'

Subject:

FW: DRU - Field Representative

From: Nelson, Renee Marie

Sent: Wednesday, April 05, 2017 12:54 PM

To: Morrison, Shirley M

Cc: Horsey, Brian K; Campbell, Ryan P.; Shuler Jr., George R

**Subject:** DRU - Field Representative

Good afternoon.

Thank you for your interest in the above position within DRU.

Unfortunately, you will not be considered for this position at this time.

This decision is based on absence occurrence standards for permanent transfers and promotions as set by the Collective Bargaining Agreement. The current absence standard is 6 occurrences for 26 days (6/26) over a two (2) year period. You have nine (9) occurrences for eight (8) days of non-FMLA absences over two years.

#### The occurrences include:

3/26/2015	Absence - Sick
3/27/2015	Absence - Sick
6/5/2015	Absence - Sick
6/6/2015	Absence - Sick
7/16/2015	Absence - Sick
7/17/2015	Absence - Sick
7/31/2015	Absence - Sick
8/17/2015	Absence - Sick
9/30/2015	Late
3/8/2016	Late
8/4/2016	Late
8/17/2016	Late

If you have any questions, please call me.



Renee M. Nelson | Manager of Labor Relations | Customer Affairs Philadelphia Gas Works | 800 W. Montgomery Ave | Philadelphia, PA 19122

# Exhibit B

# Morrison, Shirley M

From:

Morrison, Shirley M

Sent:

Friday, April 07, 2017 10:52 AM

To:

'spaige524@gmail.com'

Subject:

FW: fmla leaving

From: Morrison, Shirley M

Sent: Friday, January 22, 2016 2:57 PM

To: Horsey, Brian K

Subject: FW: fmla leaving

From: Morrison, Shirley M

Sent: Friday, July 31, 2015 8:11 AM

To: Jones, Taya; Roane, Don

Subject: fmla leaving

Hello,

I am leaving today 07/31/2015 FMLA for myself and am going straight to the hospital.

Thank you,

#### **Shirley Morrison**

Quality Assurance Senior Philadelphia Gas Works

Ext. 4123

Shirley.Morrison@pgworks.com

#### IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

# CASE MANAGEMENT TRACK DESIGNATION FORM

SHIRLEY MORRISON :

CIVIL ACTION

<b>.v.</b>		:			
PHILADELPHIA C	GAS WORKS	i :	NO.		٠
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SELECT ONE OF THE F	OLLOWING CA	ASE MAN	AGEMENT TRACKS:		
(a) Habeas Corpus - Cases	brought under 28	U.S.C. § 2	241 through § 2255.	(	)
(b) Social Security - Cases and Human Services de	requesting reviev nying plaintiff So	v of a decis cial Securi	ion of the Secretary of Health by Benefits.	. (	)
(c) Arbitration – Cases requ	ired to be design	ated for arb	itration under Local Civil Rule 53.2.	(	)
(d) Asbestos – Cases involvexposure to asbestos.	ing claims for pe	rsonal inju	y or property damage from	(	)
the court. (See reverse	s complex and the	it need spec	cks (a) through (d) that are vial or intense management by red explanation of special		
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(f) Standard Management -	- Cases that do no	t fall into a	ny one of the other tracks.	(X	)
6/23/2017.		>-	Plaintiff		
Date	Attorney-a	t-law	Attorney for	-	-
(215) 639-0801	(215) 639-49	70	akarpf@karpf-law.com		
<u>Felephone</u>	FAX Num	ber	E-Mail Address		

(Clv. 660) 10/02

### UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

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FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA — DESIGNATION FORM to assignment to appropriate calendar.	be used by counsel to indicate the category of the case for the purpose of
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Address of Defendant: 800 W. Montgomery Avenue, Philadelphia, PA	19122
Place of Accident, Incident or Transaction: Defendant's place of business	
(Use Reverse Side For	
Does this civil action involve a nongovernmental corporate party with any parent corporation of	and any publicly held corporation owning 10% or more of its stock?
(Attach two copies of the Disclesure Statement Form in accordance with Fed.R.Civ.P. 7.1(a)	yos□ NoM.
Does this case involve multidistrict highestion possibilities?	Yesti Nota
RELATED CASE, IF ANY:	•
Case Number: Judge	Date Terminated:
Civil cases are deemed related when yes is answered to any of the following questions:	•
1. Is this case related to properly included in an earlier numbered suit pending or within one y	ear previously terminated action in this court?
	Yes□ No□ .
2. Does this case involve the same issue of fact or grow out of the same transaction as a prior action in this court?	suit pending or within one year previously terminated
•	Yes□ No□
3. Does this case involve the validity or infringement of a patent already in suit or any earlier	
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4. Is this case a second or successive habeas corpus, social security appeal, or pro se civil righ	ts case filed by the same individual?
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2. D FELA	2. Airplane Personal Injury
3. D Jones Act-Personal Injury	3. Assault, Defamation
4. D Antitrust	4. D Marine Personal Injury
5. D Patent	5.   Motor Vehicle Personal Injury
6. D Labor-Management Relations	6. O Other Personal Injury (Please specify)
7. Xi Civil Rights	7. D Products Liability
8. D Habeas Corpus	8. D Products Liability - Asbestos
9. D Securities Act(s) Cases	9.   All other Diversity Cases
10. □ Social Security Review Cases	(Please specify)
11. D All other Federal Question Cases (Please specify)	
ARBITRATION CERT	IFICATION
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\$150,000.00 exclusive of interest and costs;	amort are drawing to constitute to this east, which east exceed the shill of
Relief other than monetary damages is sought.	
6/23/2017	ARK2484
DATE: 6/23/2017 Attorney-nt-Law	ARK2464 Attorney LD# 91538
NOTE: A trial de novo will be a trial by jury only if the	tre has been compliance with F.R.C.P. 38.
I certify that, to my knowledge, the within case is not printed to any case new pending or	within one year previously terminated action in this court
except as noted above.	
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JS 44 (Rev. 06/17)

# **CIVIL COVER SHEET**

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF THIS FORM.

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS  MORRISON, SHIRLEY  (b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff  (EXCEPTINUS. PLAINTIFF CASES)  (c) Attorneys (Firm Name, Address, and Telephone Number)  Karpf, Karpf & Cerutti, P.C.; 3331 Street Road, Two Greenwood Souite 128, Bensalem, PA 19020; (215) 639-0801; akarpf@karpf-law				DEFENDANTS PHILADELPHIA GAS WORKS			
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II. BASIS OF JURISDI	CTION (Place an "X" in O	ne Box (Inh)	III. CITIZENSHIP	OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES	(Place on "X" in One Box for Plaintif		
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120 Marine 130 Miller Act 140 Negotiable Instrument 150 Recovery of Overpayment & Enforcement of Judgment 151 Medicare Act 152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans (Excludes Veterans) 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits 160 Stockholders' Suits 190 Other Contract 195 Contract Product Liability 196 Franchise  REAL PROPERTY 1210 Land Condemnation 1220 Foreclosure 1230 Rent Lense & Ejectment 1240 Torts to Land 1245 Tort Product Liability 1290 All Other Real Property	310 Airplane 315 Airplane Product Liability 320 Assault, Libel & Slander 330 Federal Employers' Liability 340 Marine 345 Marine Product Liability 350 Motor Vehicle 355 Motor Vehicle Product Liability 360 Other Personal Injury 360 Personal Injury Medical Malpractice CIVIL RIGHTS 441 Voting 442 Employment 443 Housing/ Accommodations 445 Amer. w/Disabilities - Employment 446 Amer. w/Disabilities - Other 448 Education	365 Personal Injury Product Liability  367 Health Care/ Pharmaceutical Personal Injury Product Liability  368 Asbestos Personal Injury Product Liability  PERSONAL PROPER  370 Other Fraud  370 Other Fraud  370 Truth in Lending  380 Other Personal Property Damage  385 Property Damage  Product Liability  PRISONER PETITION  Habeas Corpus:  463 Alien Detaince  510 Motions to Vacate Sentence  530 General  533 Death Penalty  Other:  540 Mandamus & Othe  550 Civil Rights  555 Prison Condition  560 Civil Detaince Conditions of Confinement	of Property 21 US 5 690 Other  2TY 2 10 Fair Labor Standa Act 2 720 Labor/Managemer Relations 2 740 Railway Labor Ac 751 Family and Medica Leave Act Leave Act 1 790 Other Labor Litigs 2 790 Other Labor Litigs 3 791 Employee Retirem Income Security A	423 Withdrawnl   28 USC 157	376 Qui Tam (31 USC 3729(a))  □ 400 State Reapportionment  □ 410 Antitrust  □ 430 Banks and Banking  □ 450 Commerce  □ 460 Deportation  □ 470 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations  □ 480 Consumer Credit  □ 490 Cable/Sat TV  □ 850 Securities/Commodities/Exchange  □ 890 Other Statutory Actions  □ 891 Agricultural Acts  □ 895 Freedom of Information		
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VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:	UNDER RULE 2	IS A CLASS ACTION 3, F.R.Cv.P.	DEMAND \$	CHECK YES only JURY DEMAND	if demanded in complaint: : XYes 'No		
VIII. RELATED CASE IF ANY	(See Instructions):	JUDGE		DOCKET NUMBER			
6/23/2017		SIGNATURE OF AT	ORNEY OF RECORD				
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